Group of Governmental Experts of the High Contracting Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects

28 March 2018

English only

Geneva, 9–13 April 2018 (first week)
Item 6 of the provisional agenda
Other matters

General principles on Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems

Submitted by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and Other States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW)

1. The States Parties of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other States Parties to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), re-emphasizes the position of the Heads of State or Government of NAM States Parties to the Convention on Prohibition or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May be deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW) and its Protocols as reflected in the Final Document adopted at the XVII Summit of the NAM, which took place in September 2016, in Margarita Island, Venezuela.

2. The Group would further recall its position on this matter recently affirmed at the NAM Ministerial meeting held in Baku last week.

3. In this regard, the NAM Group is of the view that Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS) raise a number of ethical, legal, moral and technical, as well as international peace and security related questions which should be thoroughly deliberated and examined in the context of conformity to international law including international humanitarian law and international human rights law with the aim of identifying concrete policy options for dealing with them.

4. Therefore, NAM believes that the following elements shall be included in the substantive discussion of this matter:

(a) The implementation and enforcement of International Law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, in the context of lethal autonomous weapons systems.

(b) The responsibility of States for internationally unlawful acts caused by lethal autonomous weapons systems.

(c) Ethical and moral concerns about lethal autonomous weapons systems. The discussion on the autonomy, lethality and critical functions of these weapons.

(d) Common understandings, definitions and other concepts including of semi-autonomous weapons.

(e) Military technology and risk of an arms race of fully autonomous weapons, and the technology gap amongst States.

(f) The impact on international and regional peace and security.

(g) Legally binding international instrument stipulating prohibitions and regulations on lethal autonomous weapons systems.

5. The NAM States Parties and Other States Parties to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) welcomed the outcome of the GGE last year. This year in the GGE, we look forward to the development of concrete policy recommendations including elements of a legally binding instrument stipulating prohibitions and regulations on LAWS.

6. The NAM supports continued deliberations on this issue in the current open-ended Group of Governmental Experts (GGE), taking into account all proposals past, present and future. We look forward to the further consideration of this issue in a holistic and substantive manner in the framework of the open-ended Group of Governmental Experts (GGE).

7. The Group of NAM recognizes that the debate on autonomous weapons has continued to intensify, in recent years and has included lawyers, ethicist, human rights advocates, scientists and diplomats and others, and there have been mounting expressions of concerns about how these weapons can change warfare. Hence, NAM believes that the discussions shall always be held in an open, transparent and universal participatory nature. This will guarantee that the High Contracting Parties and the international community can be part of the evolution of this debate.

8. Regarding different proposals on a political declaration, code of conduct and other voluntary measures, including weapons review process, as well as the establishment of a Committee of Experts, NAM believes that these measures cannot be a substitute for the objective of concluding a legally binding instrument.

9. NAM is pleased that a general sense has developed among High Contracting Parties that all weapons, including those with autonomous functions, must remain under the direct control and supervision of humans at all times, and must comply with international law including International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law. These core elements must be an integral part of the legally binding instrument on LAWS. In this regard, pending the conclusion of a legally binding instrument, NAM calls upon all States to declare moratoria on the further development and use of LAWS.